

Present: Laila Barr; Dan Chavre; Kathy Dunn; Dave Elliott, vice-chair; Chris Fankhauser, (provisional); Carl Johnson (provisional); Jane Kuechle, chair; Miranda Leidich; Michael O'Neal (provisional); Carla Saulter; Tina Shereen; Roger Thordarson

Excused: Kumiko Huff; Ed Miller

Staff: Barbara de Michele, Community Relations liaison; Sarah Luthens, Community Relations Planner and liaison to the Accessible Services Advisory Committee; Anna Clemenger, KCDOT Editor; Wayne Watanabe, Metro IT Manager; Beth Somerfield, Metro webmaster; Major Dave Jutilla, Metro Transit Police; Detective Megan Dauber, Metro Transit Police

Guests: Carol Finn (provisional member, pending Councilmember approval); Brian Ferry, One Bus Away; Keri Williams, UW graduate student; Yegor Malinovskiy, UW graduate student; Jerome Pipitone, Accessible Services Advisory Committee

Kuechle called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m,

Accessible Services Advisory Committee

Luthens and Pipitone gave a brief overview of the Accessible Services Advisory Committee's mission, purpose and structure as part of an on-going exchange of perspectives and exploration of a possible TAC-ASAC merger. The Accessible Services Advisory Committee (ASAC) was formed by the King County Council to provide Metro and County government with citizen advice about making the transit system more accessible to the elderly and disabled populations. ASAC is also chartered to advocate for improvements to the system on behalf of the disabled and elderly communities.

Pipitone cited the "calling out stops" program as one of ASAC's major achievements, although there's still a need for improvement. About 68% of Metro drivers actually comply with the calling out stops program. Pipitone made the point that this program has helped everyone navigate the system more easily. "We are you," he said, "and you may be us."

Luthens explained that ASAC deals with a wide range of disabilities and issues. Challenges differ for the blind, deaf/blind, physically disabled, developmentally disabled and elderly, as well as those with "invisible disabilities" such as mental illnesses. The disabled and elderly communities are not monolithic, and they do not all approach potential solutions in the same way. It is very important to listen and "walk in the shoes of" a particular disability.

Pipitone reviewed several major issues facing ASAC, including the tri-annual screening that is required by Metro, ACCESS scheduling and reliability, the general accountability

Note: Provisional membership is provided to Transit Advisory Committee nominees whose applications have been approved by Metro staff, approved by their respective Councilmembers, and submitted to the Executive. Provisional members are allowed to deliberate with other TAC members, but may not participate in votes or be elected to committee leadership posts.

of the ACCESS contractor, fare increases and the physical characteristics (such as low-floor buses) for people in wheelchairs. These are all areas where ASAC would like to make a difference in improved service, as well as a clearer advocacy role for the group.

TAC members weighed in with additional comments:

- Thordarson asked if anyone has ever explored the idea of mobile testing stations so ACCESS riders would not have to come to Seattle to re-qualify their status.
- Barr asked if people with permanent blindness were required to be re-qualified.
- Elliott asked why people with permanent physical disabilities were required to re-qualify. Pipitone said that the theory is that people with disabilities may improve with therapy or training, which does sometime happen. However, in many cases the peak level of performance has been reached. He also said that Metro prefers the assessment of their own doctors, instead of using assessments provided by personal physicians.
- Saulter asked for the criteria for using ACCESS vs. fixed route service. Pipitone responded that many individuals use both services. He has two destinations that he cannot access with his wheelchair. In those two cases he uses ACCESS. The rest of the time he utilizes fixed route service.
- Kuechle, who works for an organization serving the developmentally disabled, said that there are major issues with the timing of ACCESS buses. She cited examples of the ACCESS bus arriving early at the workplace with clients. Regulations required them to take the clients home, even though the facility would have been open within a short period of time.
- ONeal said one of the major issues is the lack of accountability for contracted services. He gave the example of a short ride on ACCESS that took over an hour and a half to complete due to ride-sharing regulations. ONeal, who works for the Washington State Services for the Blind, said he has clients learning adaptive skills who must leave home at 5 a.m. to ensure that they arrive at their training at the correct time. "The scheduling needs vast improvement," he concluded.
- Shereen, who is a physician at a public health clinic, raised the issues of regional reduced fare distribution and the proposed increase in fares for disabled and low income people. When asked if a 25 cent increase was really difficult, she replied that all of her clients live on \$329 per month. "A 25 cent increase, when applied to every ride they take, makes a huge impact."

Participants ended the discussion agreeing that there were many overlapping areas of interest between TAC and ASAC. Kuechle thanked Pipitone and Luthens for their attendance at the meeting.

Transit Applications and Data Workshop

Fankhauser reported on his attendance at Metro's Transit Applications and Data Workshop, held on October 22. He said that the main message from application developers is that they want Metro to be "open, open, open" with their data, that they need virtual venues and other opportunities to collaborate with Metro, and that there are inconsistencies in the data formats that need to be resolved by working together.

Overall, he said the workshop had been “very positive.” Saulter volunteered that her husband had also attended the workshop and had the same response.

De Michele explained to the TAC that the workshop was strongly supported by Metro General Manager Kevin Desmond. It drew 55 participants, with a waiting list of 15 additional attendees. Metro views the collaboration between application developers and Metro as a “win-win,” with improved customer satisfaction as a mutual goal.

Watanabe followed up by saying that Metro hopes to sponsor future activities, but wants to get some of the legal issues “put aside.” As a result of the workshop, 70 individuals have signed up to get Metro data. By the end of this year, Metro hopes to have significantly increased the amount of data available to developers, through multiple channels. He also talked about the Virtual Transportation Community initiative which would allow people to sign up online to become a member of the Route 7 Club or the Route 214 Club (as examples). Metro already is building e-mail notification lists for snow and other emergencies.

OneBusAway.com

Ferris introduced OneBusAway.com, a project he started as a University of Washington student to make real-time Metro bus arrival times available by cell phone or iPod. Some 7,000 people use the service each day. The University has now taken the project on in a more formal way, and Ferris was seeking input from the TAC about ways to improve the service. Most TAC members were aware of or actually use onebusaway.com as part of their daily bus riding activities. Ferris, Williams and Malinovskiy led the TAC through a brief exercise and left materials for them to fill out at their leisure and mail back to the team.

KC Metro Exclusion and Suspension Policy

Major Dave Jutilla and Detective Megan Dauber, Metro Transit Police reviewed the current KC Metro Transit exclusion and suspension policy and presented a revised version for input from TAC. The policy lays out a progressive series of punishments for people who act out / commit crimes on the bus or at Metro Transit properties. Punishments can range from a suspension lasting a few hours to a year-long suspension for major crimes against persons. A review panel may also permanently ban an individual from riding the Metro system following multiple violations or an especially grievous event that may cause concern for the safety of customers and employees.

The revised policy cleaned up some current language and also made the list of penalties clearer to those who want or need to appeal their suspension. Jutilla said that the exclusion and suspension policy is a tool for keeping very dangerous people off the buses. For minor infractions, Metro has found that people will “self-regulate,” either because they don’t want further suspensions or because they can’t incur further penalties. Over 1500 people per year are suspended for some length of time from the system by the transit police.



Jutilla said that the current capacity of the Metro Transit Police is 65 officers, with 3 to 5 vacancies at any given time. This compares with forces of 200 to 300 transit police in similarly sized agencies in other parts of the country. In April, the Metro Transit Police expanded to full 24 hours a day, seven days a week coverage. Given the small numbers, the Metro Transit Police have made significant progress over the past few years, with the number of driver and passenger assaults down.

ONeal said that he applauded the revised policy's emphasis on crimes against people, instead of crimes against property. ***In a round-robin assessment of the policy, all members gave their individual approval of the revised language.***

TAC-ASAC Merger

Barr and Dunn gave a brief report on the TAC-ASAC merger discussions held on Monday, November 9. The group discussed possibilities for the merger and brainstormed new ways of approaching committee structure and working relations. The next TAC-ASAC merger meeting is scheduled for December 1.

Retreat

De Michele reported that the joint TAC-ASAC annual retreat has been successfully scheduled for Saturday, January 23, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in the 8th Floor Conference Center. Saulter, who is pregnant, said she might not be able to attend due to a "blessed event."

Kuechle adjourned the meeting promptly at 8:30 p.m.